CLAIMS

1. A method for opportunistically tracking the location of a portable device (10a) in a wireless infrastructure (12) comprising at least one fixed station (14a) operable to communicate wirelessly with said portable device, comprising:

the portable device providing its unique device identifier (ID1) to the station (14a) when within communication range of said station,

generating association data (26a) comprising the unique identifier with the location of said station, and

uploading said associated data via a backchannel (16) to a remote database (20) wherein said data is stored.

2. A method according to claim 1 wherein upon receipt of a unique identifier (ID1) the station (14a) transmits said identifier and its station identifier (51) to an infrastructure computer (18).

3. A method according to claim 2 wherein the infrastructure computer (18) receives said station identifier and unique device identifier, and generates association data comprising time and date of reception together with the device identifier and the location of the station.

4. A method according to claim 3 wherein the infrastructure computer (18) uploads said associated data (26a) to the remote database (20).

5. A method according to claim 1 wherein the station (14a) generates association data comprising time and date of unique identifier reception together with the unique identifier and the location of the station, and the station (14a) uploads said associated data to the remote database (20).

6. A method according to claim 1, wherein a client terminal (22) connects with the database (20), and wherein said database is operable to supply associated data (26a) to said terminal (22) in dependence on the client supplying a unique identifier.

7. A method according to claim 6, wherein the supply of associated data (26a) is supplied in exchange for a fee.

8. A system for opportunistically tracking the location of a portable device (14a) having a unique identifier (ID1) associated therewith, comprising a wireless infrastructure (12) having at least one fixed station (14a), station receiving means (144) for receiving the unique identifier transmitted by said portable device when within communication range, generation means (142) for generating association data comprising the unique identifier with the location of said station, and uploading means (142) for uploading said generated associated data via a backchannel (16,17) to a remote database (20) wherein said data is stored.

9. A system according to claim 8, further comprising an infrastructure computer (18) in communication with the at least one station (14a) of said infrastructure (12) and the database (20), said computer having stored information (24) relating to the location of the at least one station, and wherein said at least one station is configured to communicate the received unique identifier (ID1) to the computer (18), and wherein said computer (18) generates and uploads said associated data (26a) to the remote database via the backchannel (16,17).

10. A system according to claim 8, wherein communication between the at least one station and the portable device is performed via a wireless protocol in which devices are assigned unique identifiers.

11. A system according to claim 10, wherein the protocol is the ZigBee protocol.

12. A system according to claim 10, wherein the protocol is the Bluetooth protocol.

13. A system according to any preceding claim, further comprising a remote client terminal (22) operable to establish a connection with the database (20), and wherein said database is operable to supply associated data (26a,b) to said client terminal in dependence on the client terminal supplying a unique device identifier.

14. A system according to claim 13, wherein the supply of associated data is supplied in exchange for a fee.

15. A database (20) for use with the system of claim 8, said database storing location tracking information (28), the information comprising date, time and location data associated with a unique wireless device identifier (ID1), and wherein the database is operable to supply said information in response to a request comprising a unique device identifier.

16. A fixed station (14a) for use with the system of claim 8, comprising means (144) for receiving a unique identifier, means (142) for generating association data and means for uploading said data to a connected computer (18).

17. A portable device having a unique identifier for use with the system of claim 8 in the form of a tag (10c) having a ZigBee radio module (141).